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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#)
SUBJECT: ECF: IMPACT OF RECENTLY REMOVED WEST BANK
OBSTACLES WILL BE LOCALIZED AND MINIMAL

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Brig. Gen. Eitan Dangot, Military Advisor to the Minister of Defense provided the Ambassador in late November with a second list of 25 West Bank obstacles identified by the IDF as recently dismantled. According to Dangot, the IDF completed the removal of these obstacles as of November 22. Analysis by ECF (Economic Cooperation Foundation) Project Coordinator Ron Shatzberg indicates that the direct impact of the removal of these specific obstacles on the Palestinian fabric of life will be localized and minimal. He noted that the dismantlement of 11 earthmounds along Road 585 near Jenin and the transition of the Deir Balut checkpoint to "normally opened" are welcomed by local Palestinians and would benefit multiple Palestinian villages. He also said however, that the other obstacles will not likely increase the overall movement and access of West Bank Palestinians. In some cases, Shatzberg questioned the IDF's claim that an obstacle was removed. End summary.

Obstacles Removed Have Minimal Overall Effect

12. (C) Brig. Gen. Eitan Dangot, Military Advisor to the Minister of Defense provided the Ambassador with a list of 25 West Bank obstacles identified by the IDF as recently dismantled. According to Dangot, the IDF completed the removal of these obstacles to movement as of November 22. The list provided to the Ambassador identifies these obstacles as removed by the IDF:

-- Jenin Area (11): 11 earthmounds along Road 585 between the Palestinian villages of Ya'bad and Arraba;

-- Nablus Area (1): One earthmound blocking access through an underpass between the Palestinian villages of Burin and Madama;

-- Tulkarm Area (4): Four earthmounds along the road connecting the Palestinian villages of Bala'a and Silt al Daher;

-- Qalqilyah Area (1): One manned checkpoint -- named Deir Balut or Shield 50 -- removed and transitioned to "normally opened;"

-- Ramallah Area (4): Four earthmounds removed near the Palestinian villages of Silwad and Kafr Malik;

-- Bethlehem Area (1): One temporary barricade (large cement cube) south of the Palestinian village of Nahalin

along Route 367;

-- Hebron Area (3): Three earthmounds along Route 317, located south of the Palestinian village of As Samu'.

13. (C) Analysis by ECF (Economic Cooperation Foundation) Project Coordinator Ron Shatzberg indicates overall, that the direct impact of the removal of these specific obstacles on the Palestinian fabric of life will be localized and minimal. He, however, highlighted the dismantlement of 11 earthmounds along Road 585 near Jenin and the transition of the Deir Balut checkpoint near Qalqilyah to "normally opened" as welcomed by local Palestinians and said that these removals would benefit multiple Palestinian villages. Shatzberg obtained the following information through field assessments, with the assistance of the B'tselem and Machsom Watch organizations who monitor Palestinian movement restrictions in the West Bank, and interviews with IDF brigade commanders and local Palestinians.

Jenin

14. (C) The IDF identified, and the governor of Jenin confirmed, that 11 earthmounds were removed along Road 585 in the northern West Bank. This removal has been welcomed and is important to local Palestinian farmers who have increased access to their fields around the villages of Arraba, Kufrat, and Ya'bad from Road 585. Shatzberg noted that the removal of these obstacles was likely an easy IDF security concession because Road 585 east of the Hermesh and Mevo Dotan settlements is not traditionally used by Israeli civilians. Since Hermesh and Mevo Dotan are close to the Green Line, settlers from these settlements usually exit the West Bank,

TEL AVIV 00003578 002 OF 003

and travel south through Israel proper, and reenter the West Bank if they need to reach other settlement areas. For these settlers, traveling through Israel deflects the need to drive south through the large corridor between Jenin and Nablus.

Nablus

15. (C) Shatzberg, B'tselem, and local Palestinians contest the IDF's claim that an earthmound blocking access to an underpass linking the Palestinian villages of Burin and Madama (located south of Nablus) was removed. They assert that this underpass has been open for the past two years.

Tulkarm

16. (C) The IDF list identified four earthmounds removed on the road connecting the Palestinian villages of Bala'a and Silt Al Daher, located east of Tulkarm. According to local Palestinians, however, the obstacles that the IDF recently removed were erected approximately six months ago. This road is regularly open, is used by Palestinians who want to bypass the Anabta checkpoint (located south of Bala'a), as well as those who have orchards adjacent to the road. While the road is important and often used for travel to Nablus and Tulkarm, the IDF's removal of these obstacles has minimal impact on the local Palestinian population because they found ways to go around the earthmounds when the IDF first established them, according to Shatzberg.

Qalqilyah

17. (C) The IDF brigade commander and Palestinians confirmed that the Deir Balut, or Shield 50 checkpoint, located on

Route 446 south of Qalqilyah has been transitioned to "normally opened," meaning that soldiers no longer check every Palestinian vehicle. The transition of this checkpoint has been welcomed by Palestinian residents of Deir Balut and nearby villages, as it had prevented Palestinian from traveling southbound to reach Ramallah. Checkpoint watchers say that although there is an IDF presence nearby and soldiers still check cars on occasion, Palestinians are traveling through this area fairly unobstructed. Deir Balut and the nearby villages of Rafat and Az Zawya have an estimated population of about 4,500 people.

Ramallah

¶18. (C) Although the IDF claimed that an earthmound was removed along the road linking the Palestinian villages of Silwad and Ein Yabrud, local Palestinians told B'tselem that this road, which serves as a Palestinian bypass of Route 60, has been open for years and was not recently been closed.

¶19. (C) While B'tselem confirms that the IDF removed an earthmound blocking access through the Wadi Kis tunnel, located north of Ramallah near the Palestinian village of Yabrud, the organization notes that the tunnel was re-blocked approximately one week ago. As this tunnel, which serves as a bypass to Route 60, facilitates access to Palestinians who have fields across Route 60, the opening of this tunnel would be welcomed by local residents, according to Shatzberg.

¶10. (C) Shatzberg describes the removal of earthmounds east of the Palestinian villages of Kafr Malik and Al Mughayyir as helpful, but having minimal impact. Although the removal of these earthmounds provide the villages access to Route 458, Shatzberg notes that Palestinians from these villages do not use Route 458 to reach Ramallah, which serves as their focal point for economic activity and services. However, providing an additional route in and out of these areas will be useful in the event that alternative back roads used by the Palestinians are blocked.

Bethlehem

¶11. (C) Although the IDF claimed that a large cement cube

TEL AVIV 00003578 003 OF 003

was removed at the entrance of the Palestinian village of Nahalin, located southwest of Bethlehem, Shatzberg said that this entrance was never blocked. Shatzberg opined that the cement cube the IDF claims it removed was probably one that was situated along the side of the road but not blocking traffic. In the event that the IDF needed to establish a roadblock or a flying checkpoint, this cement block could have easily be moved to accommodate security requirements. It is unclear what IDF action was taken in this area.

Hebron

¶12. (C) The IDF removed three earthmounds located at dirt roads leading to Route 317 in the southern West Bank. According to Shatzberg, obstacles along Route 317 were supposed to be removed when, in 2006, the Israeli High Court of Justice ordered the Defense Ministry to dismantle a small concrete wall that was built along this road. When the order was carried out approximately five months ago, the dirt roads connecting to Route 317 were supposed to be opened for the usage of the local Palestinian population. The removal of these three earthmounds could have a localized positive impact on a small number of farmers.

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JONES